

REPORT

BY

W. L. MACKENZIE KING, C.M.G.

Deputy Minister of Labour

ON

MISSION TO ENGLAND TO CONFER WITH THE
BRITISH AUTHORITIES ON THE SUBJECT OF

IMMIGRATION TO CANADA FROM THE ORIENT

AND

IMMIGRATION FROM INDIA IN PARTICULAR

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EXCELLENT MAJESTY

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To His Excellency the Right Honourable Sir Albert Henry George, Earl Grey, Viscount Howick, Baron Grey of Howick, in the County of Northumberland, in the Peerage of the United Kingdom, and a Baronet; Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, &c., &c., Governor General and Commander in Chief of the Dominion of Canada.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCE:

The undersigned has the honour to submit to Your Excellency the report of W. L. Mackenzie King, C.M.G., Deputy Minister of Labour, on his mission to England to confer with the British authorities on the subject of immigration to Canada from the Orient, and immigration from India in particular.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

(Signed) RODOLPHE LEMIEUX,
Minister of Labour.

OTTAWA, May 4, 1908.

REPORT

BY

W. L. MACKENZIE KING, C.M.G., DEPUTY MINISTER OF LABOUR, ON HIS MISSION TO ENGLAND TO CONFER WITH THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES ON THE SUBJECT OF IMMIGRATION TO CANADA FROM THE ORIENT, AND IMMIGRATION FROM INDIA IN PARTICULAR.

To His Excellency the Governor General in Council:

I have the honour to submit to Your Excellency in Council, a report on my mission to Great Britain to confer with the British authorities on the subject of immigration from the Orient, and immigration from India in particular, the circumstances and objects of which mission are briefly detailed in the following copy of a report of the Committee of the Privy Council, approved by His Excellency the Governor General on March 2, 1908:—

‘On a memorandum dated 2nd March, 1908, from the Right Honourable Sir Wilfrid Laurier, representing that notwithstanding the regulations for the restriction of immigration from the Orient, certain classes of immigrants, in particular British East Indians, are being induced to come to Canada under circumstances which may necessitate a refusal of their admission to our shores;

✓ ‘That experience has shown that immigrants of this class, having been accustomed to the conditions of a tropical climate, are wholly unsuited to this country, and that their inability to readily adapt themselves to surroundings so entirely different inevitably brings upon them much suffering and privation; also, that were such immigration allowed to reach any considerable dimensions, it would result in a serious disturbance to industrial and economic conditions in portions of the Dominion, and especially in the province of British Columbia; ✓

‘That an effective restriction of immigration from India is desirable, therefore, not less in the interest of the East Indians themselves, than in the interest of the Canadian people;

That moreover, the whole subject of Oriental immigration is one of first concern to Canada, and affecting, as it does, the relations of the Dominion with foreign powers, and the relations of our people with fellow British subjects in India, involves considerations of the highest importance, not only to Canada, but to the British Empire as a whole;

‘That it is desirable that on this important question there should be as complete an interchange of views between the authorities of Great Britain and Canada as may be possible, and that in reference to it there should be a complete understanding between the governments of the two countries;

‘Mr. W. L. Mackenzie King, C.M.G., Deputy Minister of Labour, has recently made full enquiry under Royal Commission into the causes by which

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Oriental labourers have been induced to come to Canada, and as he is familiar with the subject in its many bearings, Sir Wilfrid Laurier is of the opinion that by sending him to England to confer with the authorities of the Colonial and India Offices, and such other departments of the British Government as may be desirable, a more complete and satisfactory understanding of the situation may be reached than would be possible by the necessary limitations of official correspondence.

'Sir Wilfrid Laurier, therefore, recommends that Mr. King be commissioned to confer with the British authorities on the subject of immigration from the Orient and the immigration from India in particular, and that for that purpose he proceed to England immediately; also, that upon his return to Canada, Mr. King report to the Governor General in Council the result of his conference with the British authorities.

'The Committee submit the same for approval.

(Signed) 'RODOLPHE BOUDREAU,
'Clerk of the Privy Council.'

OUTLINE OF MISSION.

Having been commissioned as set forth in this report, I left Ottawa on March 5, and sailed for England from St. John, N.B., on the ss. *Empress of Ireland* on Friday afternoon, March 6, arriving at Liverpool on the morning of Saturday, the 14th, and at London on the afternoon of the same day.

On Monday, I called upon the Right Honourable Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, the High Commissioner for Canada, and learned that His Lordship, anticipating my arrival, had arranged for an immediate introduction at the Colonial Office. On the following day, I was received by the Right Honourable the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, Secretary of State for the Colonies, who arranged for interviews during the course of the same week with the Right Honourable John Morley, Secretary of State for India, and the Right Honourable Sir Edward Grey, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. The interviews of the first week were followed by interviews with Lord Elgin, Mr. Morley and Sir Edward Grey during the three subsequent weeks, as well as by interviews with other gentlemen of the Colonial, India and Foreign Offices. Of the interest taken in the subject of my mission by the British Ministers and officials of the several departments with whom by their direction I was privileged to confer, I cannot speak too strongly, nor can I lay too great emphasis on the sympathetic manner in which the representations made on behalf of the people of Canada were received, or the frankness and fullness with which the whole subject in its many bearings was discussed. Notwithstanding that Parliament was in session, and that in some respects the pressure of their duties was exceptional, the time accorded by the Ministers was so considerable that it was possible, within the duration of four weeks, to effect such an interchange of views and to conduct such negotiations as affords reason for believing that a satisfactory understanding of the situation has been reached, in so far, at least, as an appreciation of Canada's position in regard to Oriental immigration is concerned, and as may serve to prevent such immigration from India as may not be desirable in the interests either of the natives of that country or of the people of this country. Having concluded the necessary conferences and negotiations, I returned from England to Canada by the same vessel, sailing from Liverpool on the afternoon of Friday, April 17, and arrived at Halifax on the afternoon of Thursday, the 23rd, St. John on the following day, and Ottawa on the 25th.

NATURE OF INTERVIEWS.

It is, perhaps, sufficient to direct attention to the words of the report of council above quoted, to the effect that foreign relations and considerations of high imperial

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importance are involved in the question of Oriental immigration, to make it apparent that a minimum of publicity is desirable in the matter of representations bearing upon this subject. It has seemed in the public interest, therefore, that the several representations and the views of the authorities of Great Britain and Canada respectively, should be set forth, together with an account of the negotiations, in a confidential memorandum to accompany this report, and that reference should here be made to such phases only as seem deserving of explicit mention, and the results of the negotiations outlined just in so far as may be necessary to afford a satisfactory understanding of the outcome of the mission. The adoption of this course will explain the brevity of this report.

The question of the migration of peoples of the Orient, and the problems to which it gives rise, whether it be in connection with immigration or emigration as between different parts of the British Empire, or between portions of the British Empire and foreign countries, is by no means a new one to the British authorities. Australasia, South Africa and India have each forced a consideration of the subject upon the attention of British statesmen for years past. Of the outlying dominions, Canada's experience has been the most recent, though in kind, the issues and possibilities involved are much the same. As between Great Britain and Canada the effect of this is not without its advantage to the Dominion. It has afforded in England a ready appreciation of Canada's position, and an understanding of the sort of considerations of which it is necessary to take account. That Canada should desire to restrict immigration from the Orient is regarded as natural, that Canada should remain a white man's country is believed to be not only desirable for economic and social reasons, but highly necessary on political and national grounds. With this general view is also held the particular one that in matters which so vitally affect her own welfare, Canada is the best judge of the course to be adopted, and that as a self-governing dominion she cannot be expected to refrain from enacting such measures in the way of restriction as in the discretion of her people are deemed most expedient. As a corollary to this right of self-government is the understanding that British international alliances, and British connection, place no restrictions on the right of the Dominion to legislate as may be most desirable in matters affecting immigration. Whilst Canadian autonomy is thus fully conceded and respected, Canada's position as part of the British empire is regarded as affording a sufficient guarantee that the exercise of her plenary powers in this particular will not be without a due regard to the obligations which citizenship within the empire entails. The attitude of the Canadian government, as evidenced by the present mission, was regarded as affording a most welcome and opportune expression of Canada's recognition of her responsibilities. Nothing could have been more cordial than the appreciation everywhere expressed, that in a matter so vitally affecting the interests of British subjects in remote parts of the empire, Canada should have been the first to seek a conference with the parts affected, that the several policies might be brought into harmony and the wiser counsels of conciliation made to prevail.

The variegated character of the British empire is in no particular, perhaps, more fully exemplified than in the circumstance that within its confines are to be found all the features which the problem of Oriental immigration presents. This fact differentiates to a degree, as compared with countries of a single nationality, some of the factors which are of vital moment in a consideration of the best methods by which to cope with the difficulties that arise, in that whilst new obligations are encountered, opportunities of mutual arrangement and concession are afforded which are often impossible as between countries of distinct sovereignties. A recognition of the good of the whole brings with it an attitude of forbearance and restraint in the several parts, and, what is all important, a comprehensive understanding is rendered possible.

It was clearly recognized in regard to emigration from India to Canada that the native of India is not a person suited to this country, that, accustomed as many of them are to the conditions of a tropical climate, and possessing manners and customs so unlike those of our own people, their inability to readily adapt themselves to surroundings entirely different could not do other than entail an amount of privation and suffering which render a discontinuance of such immigration most desirable in

the interest of the Indians themselves. It was recognized, too, that the competition of this class of labour, though not likely to prove effective, if left to itself, might none the less, were the numbers to become considerable (as conceivably could happen were self-interest on the part of individuals to be allowed to override considerations of humanity and national well-being and the importation of this class of labour under contract permitted) occasion considerable unrest among workingmen whose standard of comfort is of a higher order, and who, as citizens with family and civic obligations, have expenditures to meet and a status to maintain which the coolie immigrant is in a position wholly to ignore.

CAUSES OF IMMIGRATION FROM INDIA.

My inquiry under Royal Commission into the methods by which Oriental labourers have been induced to come to Canada, which was conducted in the city of Vancouver during the months of November and December of last year, though not extensively pursued so far as the immigration from India is concerned, was quite sufficient to show that this immigration was not spontaneous, but owed its existence, among other influences, to—

(1) The distribution throughout certain of the rural districts of India, of glowing accounts of the opportunities of fortune-making in the province of British Columbia, visions of fields of fortune so brightly hued that many an India peasant farmer, to raise the money for the journey, had mortgaged to the lender of the village his home-stead and all that it contained at a rate of interest varying from fifteen to twenty per cent.

(2) The activity of certain steamship agents who were desirous of selling transportation in the interest of the companies with which they were connected and of themselves profiting by the commissions reaped.

(3) The activity of certain individuals in the province of British Columbia, among the number one or two Brahmins, who were desirous of exploiting their fellow-subjects; and certain industrial concerns which, with the object of obtaining a class of unskilled labour at a price below the current rate, assisted in inducing a number of the natives to leave under actual or virtual agreements to work for hire.

A few of the natives may have emigrated to Canada of their own accord, or because of the desire of relatives, but had the aforementioned influences not been exerted, it is doubtful if their numbers would have been appreciable.

METHODS ADOPTED TO RESTRICT IMMIGRATION.

How these several influences have been counteracted and an effective restriction obtained by administrative measures in such a manner as to render legislative action unnecessary, will be apparent from an account of what has been accomplished, as the result, in part, of the present negotiations, and in part, of legislative enactments and regulations already in force, the application of which to this class of immigration has not been hitherto wholly apparent.

(1) The misleading effects of the distribution by interested parties of literature of the class above described has been offset by warnings which the government of India has issued, whereby the natives have become informed of the risks involved in emigration to Canada, and of the actual conditions in so far as it is desirable that such should be known to persons about to sever their connection with one country for the purpose of taking up residence in another.

(2) The steamship companies which have been in any way responsible for the recruiting of emigrants, have been given to understand that the governments of Great Britain and Canada, and the authorities in India do not view with favour any action on their part calculated to foster further emigration from India to Canada.

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(3) The power of the steamship companies to ignore the wishes of the governments has been rendered largely inoperative by the application to emigration from India of the regulation of the Dominion government, prohibiting the landing in Canada of immigrants who come to this country otherwise than by a continuous journey from the country of which they are natives or citizens, and upon through tickets purchased in that country.

(4) The Indian Emigration Act (XXI. of 1883) was framed with the view of affording protection to the natives of India, who, at the instance of private individuals or corporations, might be induced to leave India to work under indenture or agreements for hire in other parts of the empire, or in foreign lands. It was found that once away from India, advantage was not infrequently taken of the necessities of this class of labour, and that individuals were subjected to great hardships and privation. To remedy this the Act provides that emigration in the sense of the departure by sea out of British India of a native of India *under an agreement to labour for hire* in some country beyond the limits of India, other than the island of Ceylon or the Straits Settlements, is not lawful except to countries specified in the schedule of the Act, 'and to such other countries as the Governor in Council from time to time by notification declares to be countries to which emigration is lawful.' Every such notification 'must contain a declaration that the Governor General in Council has been duly certified that the government of the country to which the notification refers, has made such laws and other provisions as the Governor General in Council thinks sufficient for the protection of emigrants to that country during their residence therein.'

It is, therefore, to be said that emigration (in the sense defined) to Canada from India, is not lawful under the Indian Emigration Act, and cannot be made lawful except through the action of the Canadian government in making the necessary laws, to the satisfaction of the government of India, for the protection of Indian emigrants.

It will, therefore, be seen, that of itself the Indian Emigration Act solves the problem, so far as it relates to the importation of contract labour from India to Canada, and this is the one class to be feared, since without some agreement to labour it is hardly to be expected that the number of immigrants will be large. To render this law wholly effective so far as Canada is concerned, it would be sufficient to prohibit the landing in Canada of immigrants who come in violation of the laws of their own country.

(5) With the danger of the importation of native labour under contract or agreement removed, there remains for consideration only such classes as might desire to emigrate from India of their own initiative, or as having left India and gone elsewhere, to China, for example, might be induced by agreement or otherwise, to emigrate to this country. To the immigration of the latter class the regulation of the Canadian government requiring a continuous passage from the country of which they are natives or citizens and upon through tickets, should prove an effective bar, whilst as to the former the same regulation, the warnings issued by the government of India, and the greater care which it may reasonably be expected the steamship companies will exercise in the future, should prove a real deterrent. It will be apparent, moreover, that having regard for the policy of the India government in the protection of the natives as set forth in the Indian Emigration Act, the government of Canada is fully justified in requiring, as has been its policy, of persons coming to Canada, without a knowledge of conditions, and with manners and customs wholly different from our own, especially where such persons are ignorant of our language and are without any agreement guaranteeing work, that they should, for their own protection, be in possession of a sum of money sufficient to ensure their not being reduced to a condition of mendicancy or becoming a public charge. The regulation at present in force, requiring all immigrants to have in their possession a sum of at least \$25 constitutes a requirement which for the protection of the Indians themselves, is an obvious necessity. Should this amount prove inadequate it could be increased.

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There is thus, in the last analysis, a dovetailing, so to speak, of Great Britain's well-known policy in the protection of the native races of India, and Canada's policy in the matter of immigration.

A HARMONY OF POLICIES.

Whilst effective as a means of restricting a class of immigration unsuited to Canada, it will be apparent that the arrangement as herein set forth is one which finds its justification on grounds of humanity as strong as are the economic reasons by which it is also supported. The liberty of British subjects in India is safeguarded rather than curtailed, the traditional policy of Britain in respect to the native races of India has been kept in mind, and the necessity of enacting legislation either in India or in Canada which might appear to reflect on fellow British subjects in another part of the empire has been wholly avoided. Nothing could be more unfortunate or misleading than that the impression should go forth that Canada, in seeking to regulate a matter of domestic concern, is not deeply sensible of the obligations which citizenship within the empire entails. It is a recognition of this obligation which has caused her to adopt a course which by removing the possibilities of injustice and friction, is best calculated to strengthen the bonds of association with the several parts, and to promote the greater harmony of the whole. In this, as was to be expected, Canada has had not only the sympathy and understanding, but the hearty co-operation of the authorities in Great Britain and India as well.

Respectfully submitted,

(Sd.) W. L. MACKENZIE KING,
Deputy Minister of Labour.

OTTAWA, May 2, 1908.

